

Child Safety

Crime and Violence Prevention Center * California Attorney General's Office



Parents, Do your children know about strangers? Are you comfortable letting your children answer the telephone or front door if you are home or if they are home alone? Take a minute to go over the following safety tips with your children. They could prevent your child from becoming a victim of crime. It is important that you give them examples that they will understand. Use your home, neighborhood, and school area as settings. Make sure that your children understand that their safety is important to you, and use the following points to encourage discussion about this issue.

WHO IS A STRANGER?

A stranger is someone that your child does not know. Parents and guardians need to determine who is and isn't a stranger. Explain that strangers come in many shapes and sizes. They can wear nice clothes, different clothes or even a uniform. The uniform issue is confusing to children, so take time to explain that yes, the mailman is a stranger even though he comes to the door almost every day. This does not imply that people who wear uniforms will harm children, but children need to know that if they do not know the person in uniform - that person is a stranger.

TELL YOUR CHILD TO FOLLOW THESE RULES ABOUT STRANGERS

- Never take anything like candy, ice cream or money from a stranger.
- Never talk to strangers.
- Never take a ride from a stranger.
- If a stranger asks for directions, stay away. Strangers shouldn't ask kids for help.
- Never give your name or address to a stranger.
- Never tell anyone that you are home alone if you answer the telephone or door. Tell them that mom or dad is busy. Take a message.
- If a stranger in a car bothers you, turn and run in the opposite direction.
- If a stranger tries to follow you on foot or tries to grab you, RUN AWAY, SCREAM and TELL your parents or a trusted adult friend. A dangerous stranger doesn't want to be the center of attention.

SAFETY AT HOME

Instruct your child on how to safely answer the door:

- Never open the door to a stranger.
- If a stranger knocks on the door or rings the doorbell, tell your child to look out the peep hole or call out "who's there?" If it's for you, your child should tell the visitor to wait, and leave the door locked until you are available. If you are not home, your child should tell the visitor that you are busy and to please come back later. Your child can take a message, but he or she should NEVER open the door.
- If the visitor won't go away, and your child is scared, tell him/her to call 9-1-1.

How to answer the telephone:

- When answering the telephone, your child should not give out any information. If the caller asks "who's this?" Instruct your child to ask who the caller is and whom he or she called.
- If your child is alone, he or she should never tell anyone that he or she is alone. Instruct your child to tell the caller the person can't come to the telephone and that he or she will write down a message.

- If your child feels uncomfortable or gets scared by anything the caller says, tell him/her to hang up and make sure he or she tells you about any and all telephone calls.
- If you have an answering machine, let it answer the telephone if your child is home alone.

BE STREET SMART:

Explain to your child how to safely walk to and from school:

- Always walk with a friend - there is safety in numbers. Strangers usually pick on kids that are by themselves.
- If you think that you are in danger, or if you are being followed, yell and run into the nearest store, house or back to school. Tell an adult what happened.
- Have your mom or dad or both of them walk your school route with you to make sure that it is completely safe.
- Always stick to the same, safe route going to and from school. Don't take shortcuts and never hitchhike.

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY:

Explain to your child that if someone is hurt or very sick, there is a car accident or a fire, call 9-1-1 as soon as possible. Your child needs to know that if he or she gets lost, go to a pay phone and dial 9-1-1 to get help. This is a free call from a pay phone.

